BATMAN
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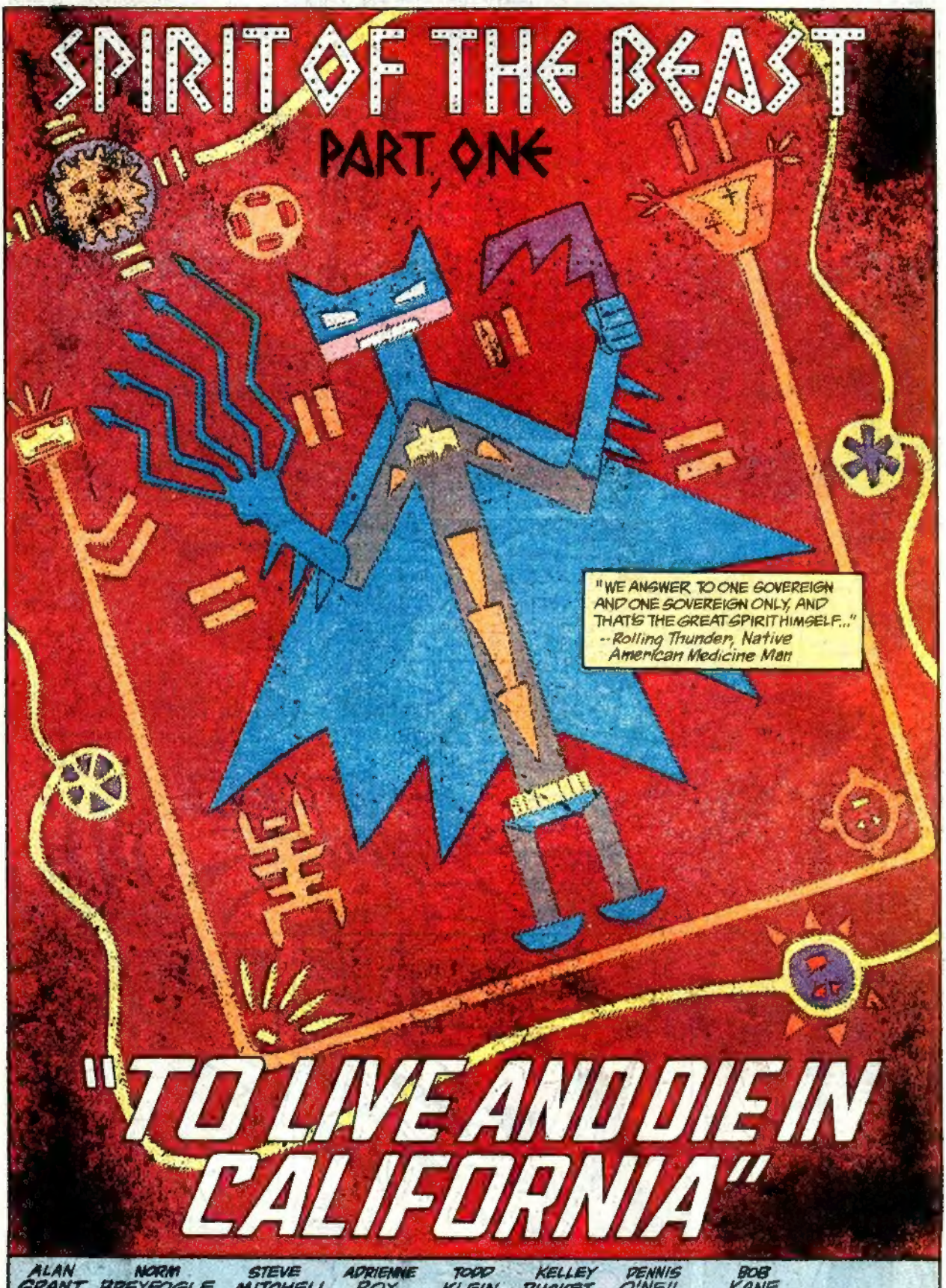
Somewhere far west of Gotham City, Batman's life will change...
GRANT
BREYFOGLE


SPIRIT OF THE BEAST
PART ONE
"WE ANSWER TO ONE SOVEREIGN AND ONE SOVEREIGN ONLY, AND THAT'S THE GREAT SPIRIT HIMSELF..."
--Rolling Thunder, Native American Medicine Man
"TO LIVE AND DIE IN CALIFORNIA"

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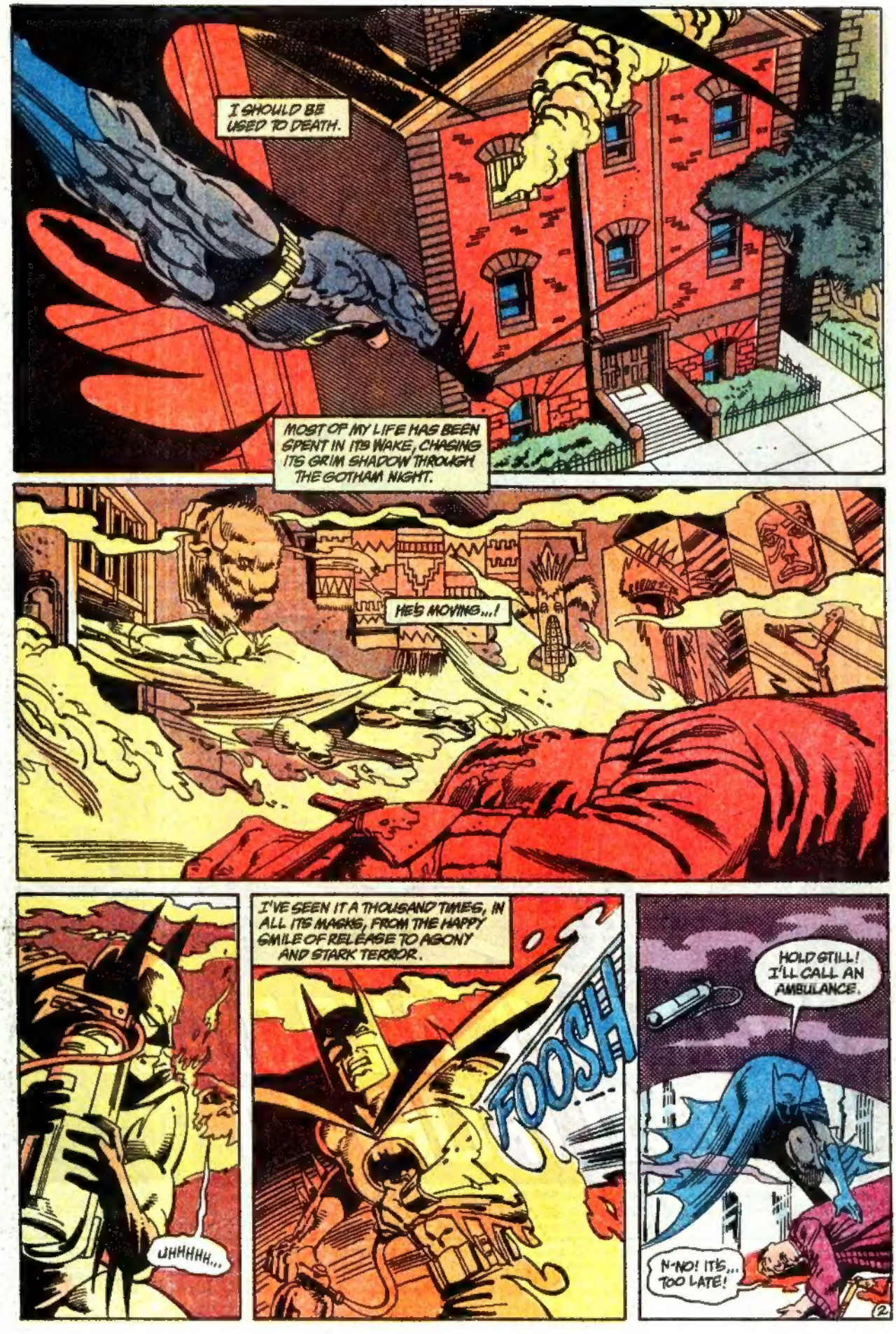
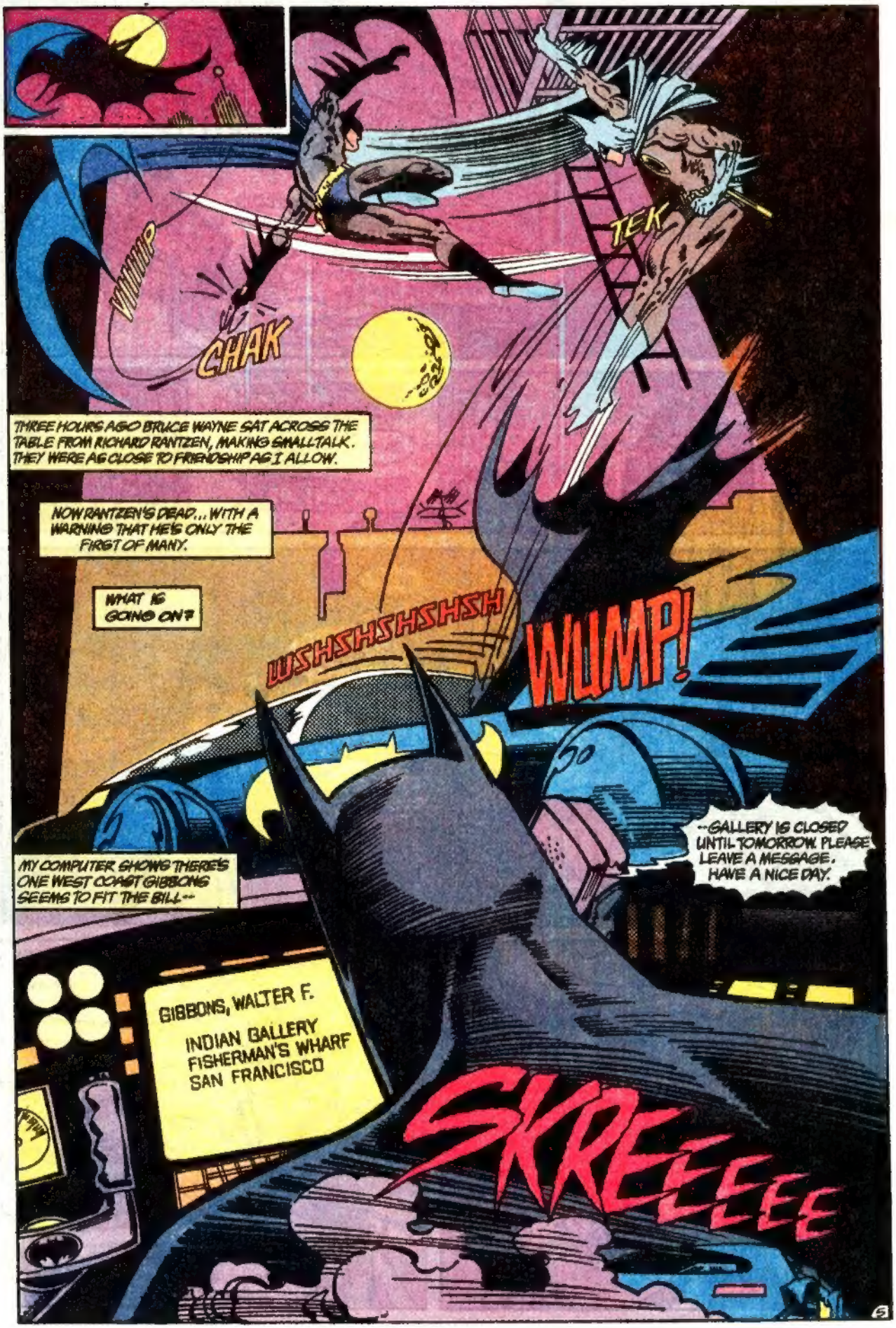

I SHOULD BE USED TO DEATH.
MOST OF MY LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT IN ITS WAKE, CHASING ITS GRIM SHADOW THROUGH THE GOTHAM NIGHT.
HE'S MOVING...!
UHHHH...
I'VE SEEN IT A THOUSAND TIMES, IN ALL ITS MASKS, FROM THE HAPPY SMILE OF RELEASE TO AGONY AND STARK TERROR.
FOOSH
HOLD STILL! I'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE.
N-NO! IT'S... TOO LATE!
2

LIS... LISTEN!
I'M ONLY TH... THE FIRST! ROBINS. MORE...! THEY-- TOOK THE BAG...
WHO? WHAT BAG?
BUT SOMEHOW, YOU'RE NEVER QUITE PREPARED FOR THAT MOMENT--
RU... RUBY VA... VAL...
GIBBONS-- NEXT! SAN FRAN... CIS...
WHEN DEATH STRIKES, LEAVING A MAN LIMP AND SHRUNKEN AND DEFLATED-- AS IF LIFE ITSELF HAD BEEN SOMETHING TANGIBLE, LIKE AN ARM OR A LEG.
--SO, MR. RANTZEN DINED AT HIS CLUB WITH BRUCE WAYNE, CAME HOME AND RETIRED TO HIS HOBBY ROOM?
AMBULANCE
THAT'S RIGHT, LIEUTENANT KITCH. YOU CAN CHECK WITH MR. WAYNE, OR THE CLUB WILL--
I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE KILLER. HOW DID HE GET IN WITHOUT YOU HEARING?

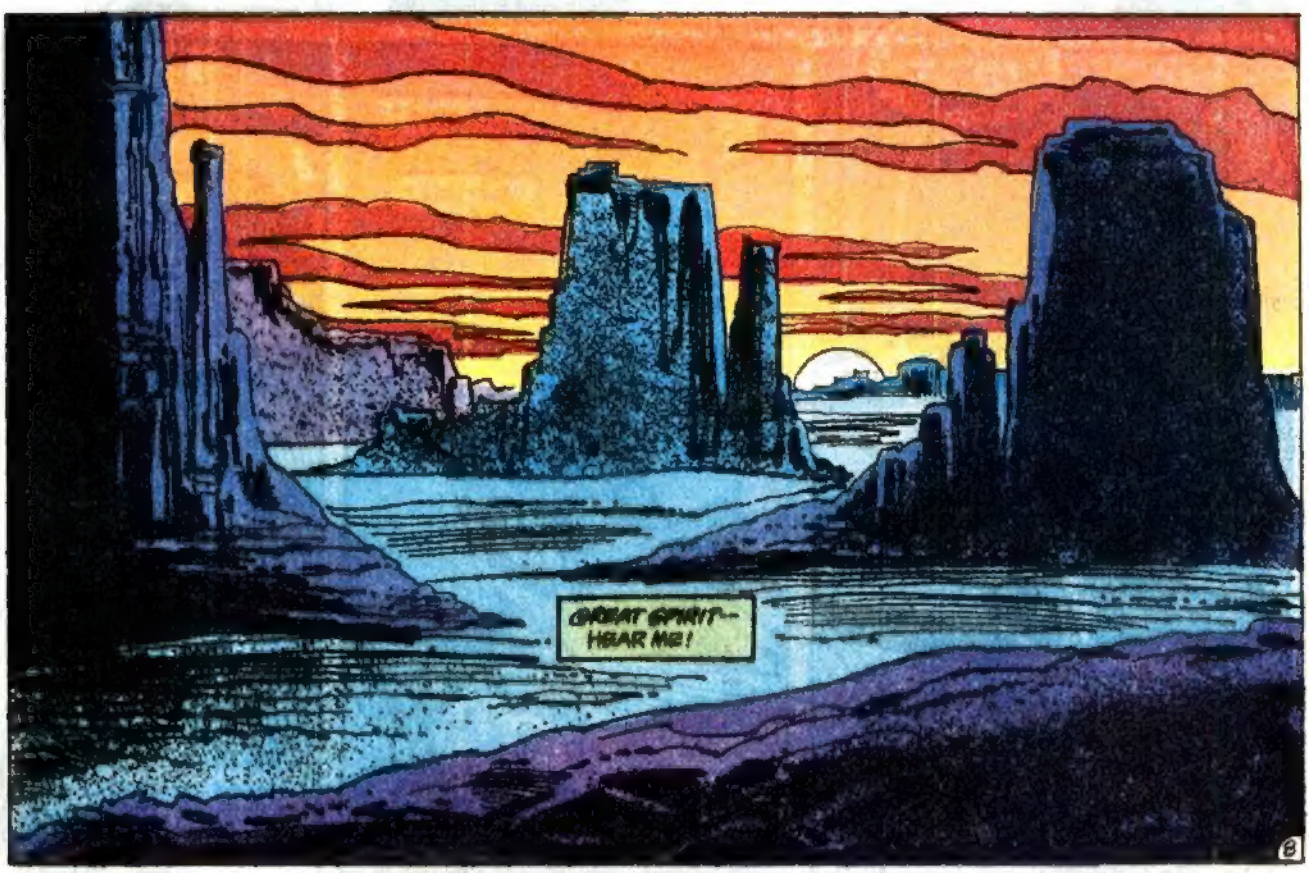
SAME WAY I DID.
BURGLAR ALARM'S BEEN DISCONNECTED-- THE WINDOW LOCK FORCED. I'D SAY HE--OR THEY-- WAS ALREADY INSIDE WHEN RANTZEN GOT HERE.
BUT WHY? WHY AX HIM TO DEATH, SET THE PLACE ON FIRE AND NOT EVEN STEAL ANYTHING?
COULD BE THE FIRE WAS STARTED TO HIDE WHAT WAS STOLEN.
WHAT WAS IN THIS CASE?
MEDICINE BUNDLES, I THINK. MR. RANTZEN HAD SOME FAIRLY OLD ONES.
HE WAS A MEDICAL COLLECTOR, TOO?
AN INDIAN SHAMAN'S TOOLS AND SACRED OBJECTS. TIES IN WITH WHAT RANTZEN TOLD ME...
ABOUT A BAG BEING TAKEN? HMM. AND RUBY VAL...? SOUNDS LIKE A SINGER, OR SOMETHING!
I'M AFRAID IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO ME.
I'LL PUT A MAN ON TRACKING DOWN THIS GIBBONS IN S.F. MAYBE HE CAN SHED SOME LIGHT.
SURE WOULD BE NICE IF I COULD WRAP THIS UP FAST. COMMISSIONER'S BACK ON THE JOB TOMORROW.
I'LL NEED A FULL STATEMENT, BATMAN, SO--
--STICK AROUND!
4


VIIIIIP
CHAK
TEK
THREE HOURS AGO BRUCE WAYNE SAT ACROSS THE TABLE FROM RICHARD RANTZEN, MAKING SMALLTALK. THEY WERE AS CLOSE TO FRIENDSHIP AS I ALLOW.
NOW RANTZEN'S DEAD... WITH A WARNING THAT HE'S ONLY THE FIRST OF MANY.
WHAT IS GOING ON?
WSHSHSHSHSH
WUMP!
--GALLERY IS CLOSED UNTIL TOMORROW. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE. HAVE A NICE DAY.
MY COMPUTER SHOWS THERE'S ONE WEST COAST GIBBONS SEEMS TO FIT THE BILL--
GIBBONS, WALTER F.
INDIAN GALLERY
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
SAN FRANCISCO
SKREEEEEEE

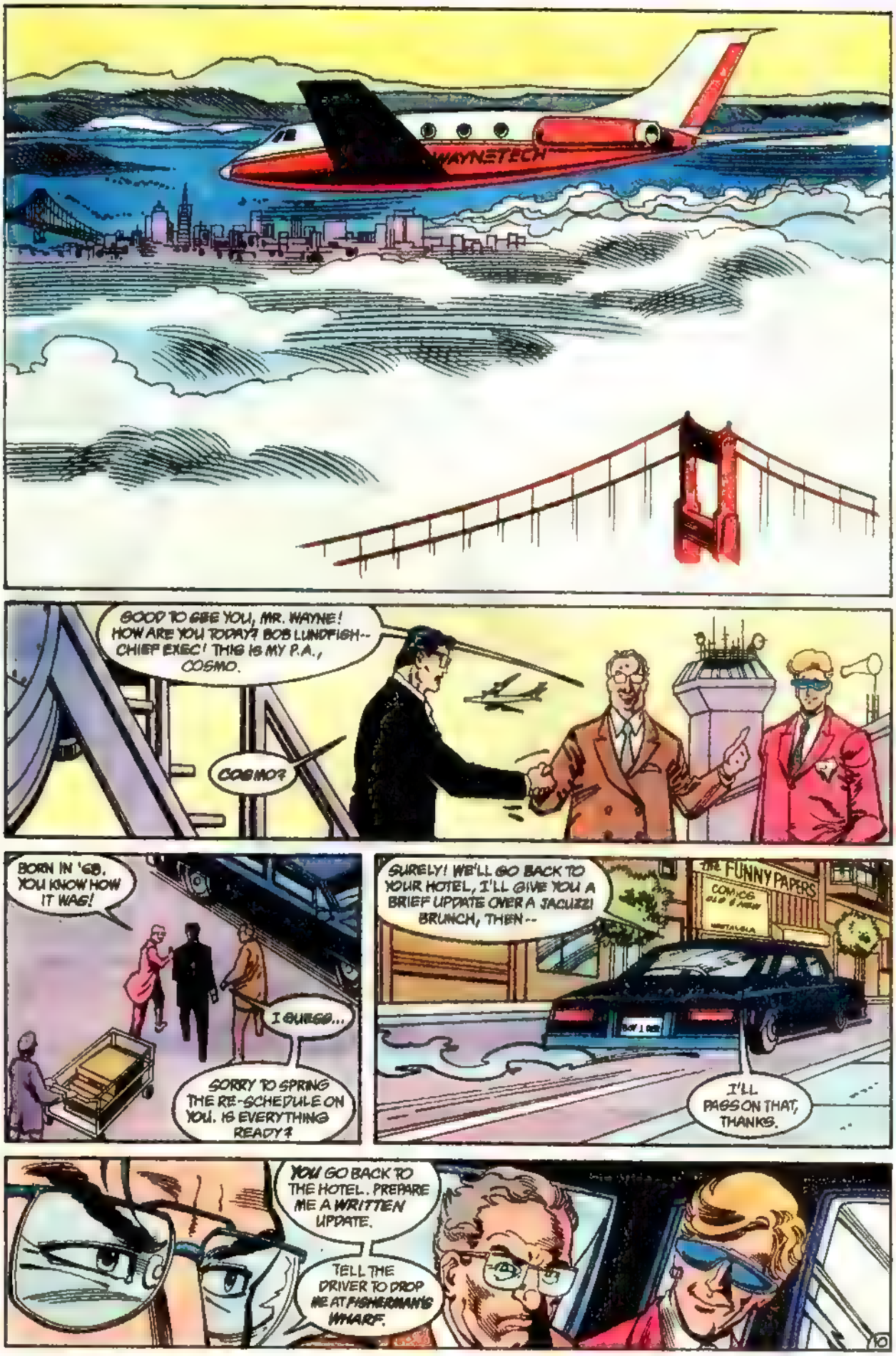
There's a warm glow in the pit of my stomach--
BZZZ
--spreading through my whole body, warming every part of me, healing...
BZZZ
Easing away the pressure, soothing the stress--
BZZZ
DAMN!
BZZZ
YOU!
SORRY. IF I'M INTERRUPTING--
NO, NO. I'M ONLY MEDITATING. COME ON IN.
MEDITATING?
STRESS REDUCTION EXERCISE. PERFECTING MY TECHNIQUE-- I'M BACK ON THE JOB TOMORROW.
SO KITCH TELLS ME. YOU... DON'T THINK YOU'RE HURRYING THINGS TOO MUCH?
FIT FOR LIFE
I COULD HAVE BEEN BACK A WEEK AGO. YOU'RE LOOKING AT A NEW MAN!
I'VE GIVEN UP JUNK FOOD-- FRIED FOOD--RED MEAT. I'M ON AN EXERCISE PROGRAM, PRACTICING STRESS REDUCTION--

I'VE EVEN GIVEN UP THE WEED--
SNF
AND BELIEVE ME, THE "WARM GLOW THAT EASES THE PRESSURE" CAN'T TOUCH THE HOT BLAST THAT FURS THE MOUTH AND BURNS THE LUNGS!
TAKE A TIP FROM ME--DON'T START!
I WON'T.
I'M IMPRESSED. PITY IT TOOK A HEART ATTACK TO MOTIVATE YOU, THOUGH.
To Jim with all my love, Sara XX
YES. BUT I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON. SOME THINGS ARE JUST TOO PRECIOUS TO THROW AWAY.
LIFE--LOVE...
SO... YOU JUST CHECKING ON MY HEALTH, OR WHAT?
I'M GOING TO BE OUT OF TOUCH FOR A DAY OR TWO. THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW.
SERIOUS BUSINESS?
COULD BE. I'LL KEEP YOU INFORMED.
"TAKE CARE."
"AND YOU."
There's a warm glow in the pit of my stomach...
7

ALFRED? THE WAYNE FOUNDATION WEST COAST MEETING SCHEDULED FOR NEXT WEEK-- BRING IT FORWARD.
I'LL FLY OUT TOMORROW.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
AND ARRANGE TO HAVE THAT... SPECIAL CONTAINER FREIGHTED OUT.
OF COURSE, SIR.
ONLY WEIRDOS DON'T DRIVE IN CALIFORNIA!


GREAT SPIRIT-- HEAR ME!

MY DAYS HAVE BEEN LONG ON THE PATH OF EVIL, BUT THEY DRAW TO A CLOSE.
I WOULD ATONE.
I HAVE GIVEN AWAY THE FRUITS OF MY DEEDS. MY FEATHERS AND STONES ARE SCATTERED TO STRANGERS.
I HAVE NOTHING.
I KNOW MY PLACE WAITS IN THE EARTH HOLE FULL OF FIRE. I KNOW I MUST SUFFER TILL THE SEVEN WORLDS ARE COMPLETE.
BUT, GREAT SPIRIT, I AM AFRAID.
IS THERE NOT SOME OTHER WAY?
"CAN I NOT ATONE?"

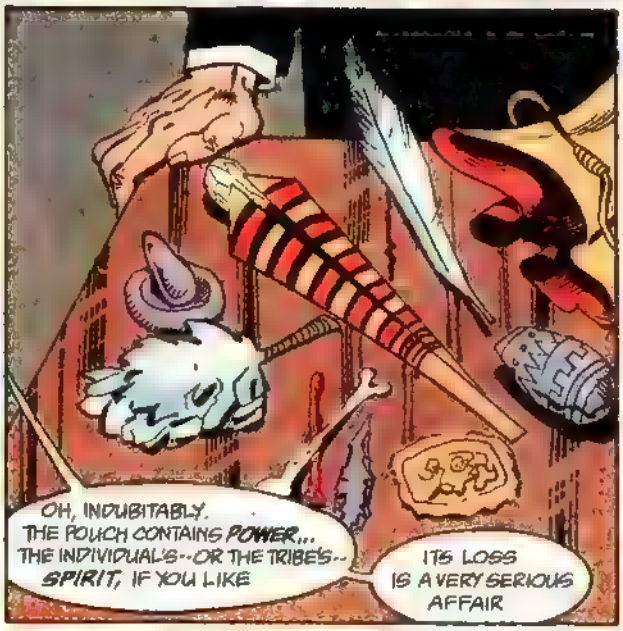

WAYNETECH
GOOD TO SEE YOU, MR. WAYNE! HOW ARE YOU TODAY? BOB LUNDFISH-- CHIEF EXEC! THIS IS MY P.A., COSMO.
COSMO?
BORN IN '68. YOU KNOW HOW IT WAS!
I GUESS...
SORRY TO SPRING THE RE-SCHEDULE ON YOU. IS EVERYTHING READY?
SURELY! WE'LL GO BACK TO YOUR HOTEL, I'LL GIVE YOU A BRIEF UPDATE OVER A JACUZZI BRUNCH, THEN--
THE FUNNY PAPERS
COMICS
I'LL PASS ON THAT, THANKS.
YOU GO BACK TO THE HOTEL. PREPARE ME A WRITTEN UPDATE.
TELL THE DRIVER TO DROP ME AT FISHERMAN'S WHARF.
10

I'LL CATCH YOU LATER THIS AFTERNOON.
FISHERMAN'S WHARF OF SAN FRANCISCO
ALIOTO'S
ALIOTO'S
SHEE! HE STEALS A WEEK, GETS THE WHOLE OFFICE IN A FLAP--AND THEN HE GOES SHOPPING!
THAT'S COOL!
MR. GIBBONS? I'M A FRIEND OF RICHARD RANTZEN...
INDIAN GALLERY
AH YES. POOR RANTZEN! GOTHAM POLICE CALLED ME EARLIER.
BUT I COULDN'T HELP THEM I ONLY KNEW RANTZEN AS A CLIENT.
SO YOU'VE NO IDEA WHY HE SHOULD HAVE WARNED YOU'D BE THE NEXT TO DIE?
NONE AT ALL NO DISRESPECT TO THE DEAD, BUT I HOPE HE WAS JUST RAMBLING!
DOES THE NAME "RUBY VAL" MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

NOT REALLY. THERE'S A RUBY VALLEY OVER IN NEVADA--WESTERN SHOSHONES SIGNED THEIR TREATY THERE, 1863
I READ A NEWSPAPER REPORT A MONTH OR SO BACK SAID THE CIVIL WAR MUSEUM OVER THERE HAD BEEN BROKEN INTO AND BURNED DOWN

THEY COULD BE CONNECTED...
WAS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE MEDICINE BUNDLES IN RANTZEN'S COLLECTION?
EVERY MEDICINE POUCH IS SPECIAL--AT LEAST TO THE INDIANS

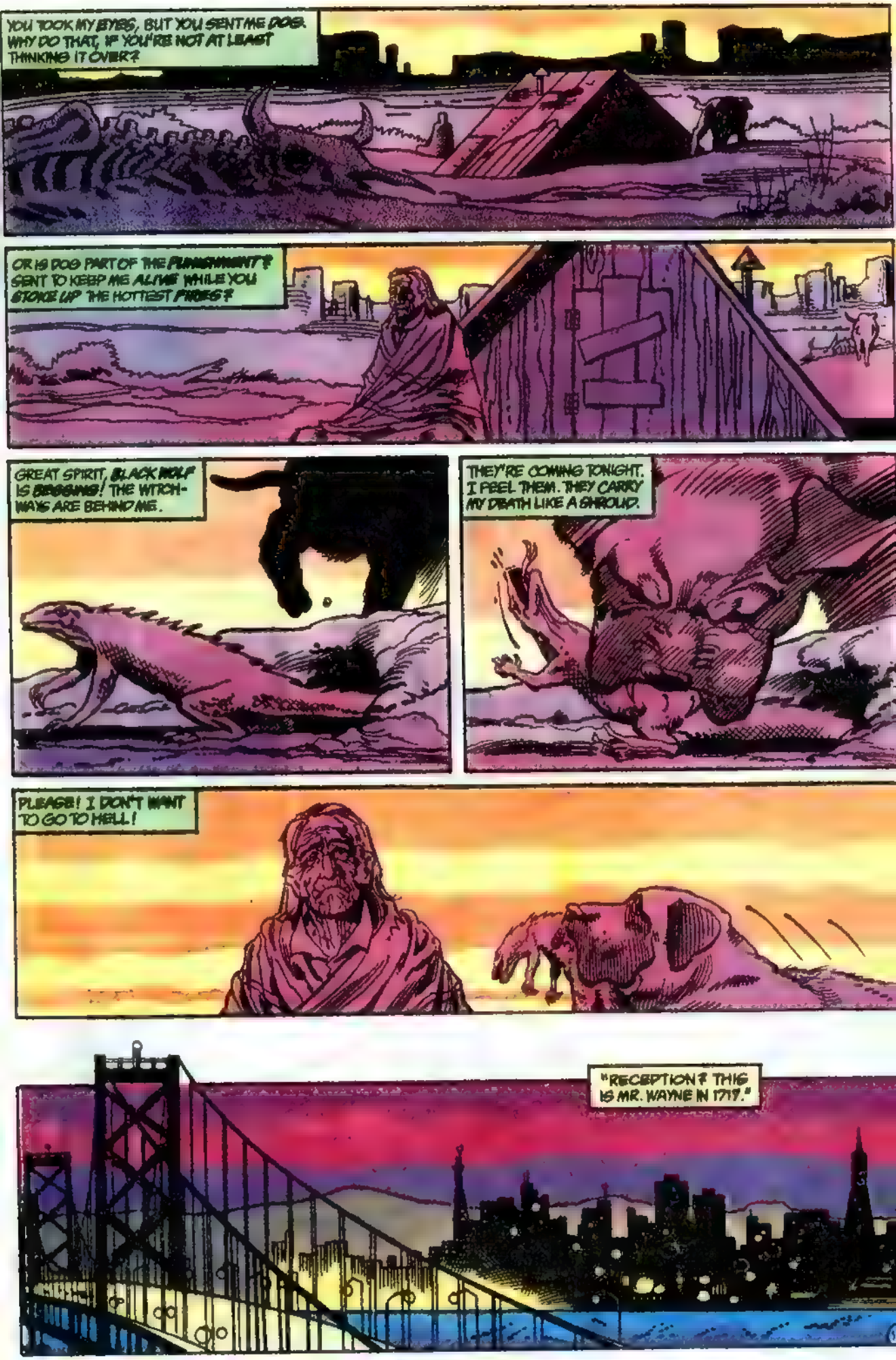
JUST A COLLECTION OF FEATHERS AND BONES AND STONES TO US -- BUT EVERY ITEM IS OF PROFOUND IMPORTANCE TO ITS OWNER.
IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO KILL FOR?


OH, INDUBITABLY. THE POUCH CONTAINS POWER... THE INDIVIDUAL'S--OR THE TRIBE'S-- SPIRIT, IF YOU LIKE
ITS LOSS IS A VERY SERIOUS AFFAIR

OR WAS, AT LEAST. THE OLD WAYS HAVE PRETTY MUCH DIED OUT NOW

INDIAN
SORRY I CAN'T BE OF ANY MORE HELP.
I'D BE VERY CAREFUL IF I WERE YOU, MR GIBBONS. AT LEAST UNTIL WE FIND OUT WHAT RICHARD RANTZEN MEANT.
I WILL.

ER... ARE YOU A POLICEMAN OF SOME SORT?
YES.
OF SOME SORT.
ALCATR TOURS
A CIVIL WAR MUSEUM BURNS DOWN IN RUBY VALLEY... RANTZEN IS AXED AND HIS APARTMENT TORCHED... AND MAYBE A MEDICINE POUCH IS STOLEN.
SO WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?
MIGHT AS WELL HEAD BACK TO THE HOTEL AND DEAL WITH LUNDFISH AND COSMO.
I'LL FINISH MY "SHOPPING" LATER
I KNOW YOU HEAR ME! I KNOW YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT IT!


YOU TOOK MY EYES, BUT YOU SENT ME DOG. WHY DO THAT, IF YOU'RE NOT AT LEAST THINKING IT OVER?
OR IS DOG PART OF THE PUNISHMENT? SENT TO KEEP ME ALIVE WHILE YOU STOKE UP THE HOTTEST FIRES?
GREAT SPIRIT, BLACK WOLF IS BRAGGING! THE WITCH-WAYS ARE BEHIND ME.
THEY'RE COMING TONIGHT. I FEEL THEM. THEY CARRY MY DEATH LIKE A SHROUD.
PLEASE! I DON'T WANT TO GO TO HELL!
"RECEPTION? THIS IS MR. WAYNE IN 1719."

CALWELL HOTEL
HOLD MY CALLS.
"MAKE SURE I'M NOT DISTURBED UNTIL MORNING."
DO YOU KNOW THE MAGNETECH WAREHOUSE ON BRANNAN?
HEY, WAS JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCED?
COMIX
"TOURIST, HUH? FROM BACK EAST?
PRIVATE PROPERTY KEEP OUT
"I KNEW IT! YOU GUYS ARE SO FORMAL.
BEEP
BEEP
CLATCH
"BESIDES, ONLY TOURISTS AN' WEIRDOS DON'T DRIVE IN CALIFORNIA!"

THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST COASTS --THE WEATHER, THE ATTITUDES, PERCEPTION OF TIME--
--BUT CRIME IS PRETTY MUCH THE SAME.
WAK
I--I DON'T BELIEVE IT...!
BATMAN!
SPAK!
KAK!
WOW! I HEARD THAT EVERYBODY WHO WAS ANYBODY ENDED UP IN SAN FRANCISCO, BUT...!
JUST WAIT'LL I ATTACH MY FLASH!

CALL THIS IN TO THE POLICE!
READY! HOLD IT--!
PAF
FLASH!
AW!
ZWEEE

KNOWS HOW TO USE THAT THING--
--TOO DANGEROUS TO MESS AROUND WITH!
CHAT!
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO'S THERE?
I'M WARNING YOU-- I HAVE A GUN!
GIBBONS-- GET BACK!
AAAH!
CHOP!

YOU MURDERING RAT--!
BRAK!
UNGH!
BRMM
VRRM
GIBBONS IS DEAD --AND THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!
VRRRMM
N GALLERY
DIDN'T GIVE THE CREEPS CREDIT ENOUGH!
IF I HADN'T STOPPED FOR THOSE TOURISTS... NO. I CAN'T AFFORD TO THINK LIKE THAT.
WUMP
NOT EVER.

AND NOW I'VE FOUND THEM, I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THEM--
BAR
VRRM
ROARR
SKREEEEE
NO!
VRRRMMM
SKREEEE!
KRANG!
VRRMM
M-MY GOD...! I COULDN'T DO NOTHIN'! THEY WAS GOIN' TOO FAST--!
IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
RAISE THE POLICE ON YOUR C.B.
DO IT!
MONEY, MEDICINE POUCHES--NOTHING TO SAY WHO, OR WHY.
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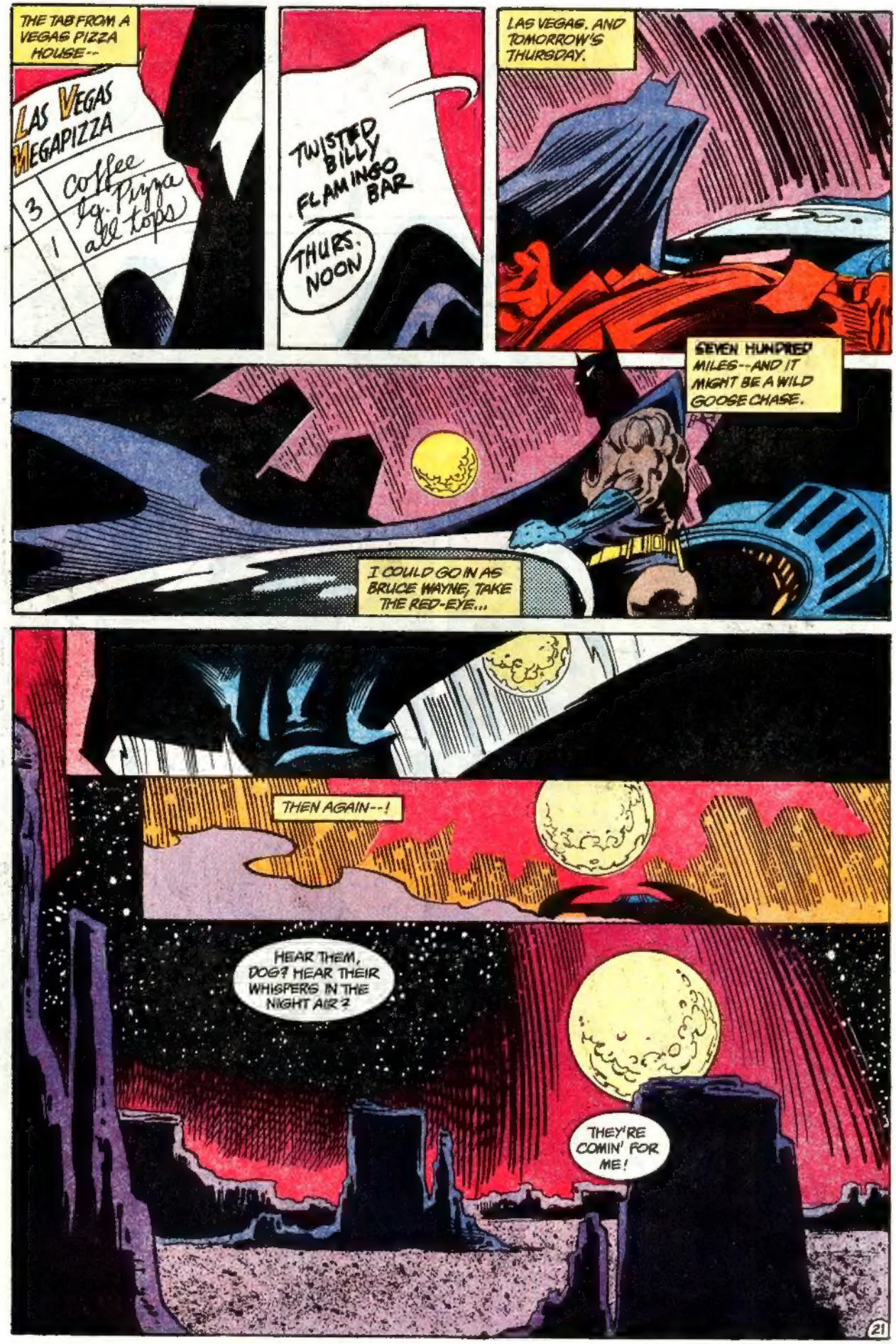
THE TAB FROM A VEGAS PIZZA HOUSE--
LAS VEGAS MEGAPIZZA
3 Coffee
1 lg. Pizza all tops
TWISTED BILLY FLAMINGO BAR
THURS. NOON
LAS VEGAS. AND TOMORROW'S THURSDAY.
SEVEN HUNDRED MILES--AND IT MIGHT BE A WILD GOOSE CHASE.
I COULD GO IN AS BRUCE WAYNE, TAKE THE RED-EYE...
THEN AGAIN--!
HEAR THEM, DOG? HEAR THEIR WHISPERS IN THE NIGHT AIR?
THEY'RE COMIN' FOR ME!
21

GONNA PUT THE WITCH-BONE IN ME.
NO USE YOU GROWLIN'. GREAT SPIRIT'S GONNA LET THEM KILL YOU, TOO, IF YOU'RE HERE.
DON'T WANNA DIE, DO YOU?
GO ON! SCRAM! FIND ANOTHER PLACE!
WHINE...
WHINE WHINE...
GO ON! THIS IS A DEATH-PLACE NOW! EVIL GONNA GET WHAT'S COMIN'!
KLAK
MAY THE GREAT SPIRIT GUIDE YOU!
NEXT ISSUE: GHOST IN THE FLESH!